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Viewing cable 05ATHENS2403, DAS BRYZA AND GREEK DEFMIN ON DEEPENING BILATERAL

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05ATHENS2403	2005-09-14 11:59	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 002403

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR, PM/RSAT, EUR/SE; DOD FOR OSD/ISP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2015

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SUBJECT: DAS BRYZA AND GREEK DEFMIN ON DEEPENING BILATERAL
MILITARY COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador Charles P. Ries for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. DAS Bryza with Greek DefMin Spiliotopoulos discussed how to deepen bilateral military ties during a September 7 meeting. Bryza praised the increased focus on strategic concerns, such as promoting stability in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans, and away from relatively minor, day-to-day concerns. In this context, he emphasized the importance of removing U.S.-origin weapons from Cyprus. Spiliotopoulos said Greece was working to come into compliance with U.S. law. Spiliotopoulos reviewed Greek concerns about Turkish military activity over the Aegean. End Summary.

Thinking Strategically

2. (C) DAS Matthew Bryza met with Greek Minister of Defense Spiros Spiliotopoulos September 7 to review bilateral military ties and promote a more strategic perspective to the relationship. The U.S. and Greek governments were increasingly focussed on broader issues of mutual concern, Bryza said. He expressed appreciation for Greek assistance in Afghanistan, where Greece recently assumed control of ISAF's Role 2 medical facility in Kabul, and in Iraq, where Greece was transporting Hungarian tanks and had donated BMPs from its own stocks to help the Iraqi armed forces. He encouraged Spiliotopoulos to continue this trend, including by removing caveats on NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

3. (C) Greece 'wants to live in a safe area' Spiliotopoulos said, and so supported efforts to stabilize the Balkans and Middle East. To that end, the Greek military was expanding its contribution to Operation Active Endeavor and was doing

what it could do politically to help stabilize Iraq. He updated Bryza on Greek efforts to be of assistance in training Iraqi personnel, noting that Athens was still waiting for a response from Baghdad to an offer to train Iraqi medical personnel in Greek military hospitals. Spiliotopoulos observed that the Greek offer to train Iraqi security personnel in a third country had run into problems, as Athens had been unable to find a suitable country willing to act as host. Ambassador encouraged Spiliotopoulos to consider the logical alternative of providing training at the Greek PfP peacekeeping training facility in Kilkis (in northern Greece), noting that the situation in Iraq had changed significantly since Greek PM had made his 'no training in Iraq or Greece' pledge at the Istanbul NATO summit. Responding to Bryza's query, Spiliotopoulos said Greece had no present plans to take the lead on one of ISAF's PRTs in Afghanistan. Greece's commitments to the medical unit, engineering unit, and airport security in Kabul, along with a 650-person deployment to Kosovo, were already straining MOD resources.

Procurement and Transformation

14. (C) Spiliotopoulos briefed Bryza on his efforts to overhaul the Greek defense procurement system, as part of a more general transformation of the Greek military. The recent decision to buy 40 F-16s reflected a new way of operating for the Greek military. Procurement decisions would be based on requirements put forward by the various Services, rather than on political factors, as it had been in the past. This would streamline the system, and ensure -- as was the case with the F-16s -- that Greece got better, more standardized equipment at more attractive prices. On a separate procurement issue, Spiliotopoulos said Greece remained interested in two U.S. EDA minesweepers, noting that the request had stalled in Congress.

Cyprus Arms Transfers

15. (C) Bryza turned to the related subject of Greek transfers of U.S.-origin equipment to Cyprus, about which the United States remained concerned and, if not resolved, could affect bilateral military ties. The recent removal of two UH-1 helicopters had been a good first step, he said, but now it was time to act on the artillery and other hardware still in place. Greece was 'in the process of dealing with the issue,' said Spiliotopoulos. Pointing out that Turkey had large amounts of U.S.-origin equipment on Cyprus (legally, because it was under the direct control of Turkish forces), he suggested that Greek equipment would remain on the island under the Greek plan. Bryza replied that, ideally, all U.S.-origin equipment would leave the island. At a minimum, however, its presence needed to accord with U.S. legal requirements. In a follow-up conversation with MOD Diplomatic Advisor Ioannis Bourloyiannis, Ambassador made clear that an outstanding Greek request to import U.S.-origin M109 howitzers from Germany would not be approved until U.S. concerns Cyprus arms were resolved.

Tensions in the Aegean

16. (C) Spiliotopoulos offered the Greek perspective on Turkish air activity over the Aegean, while demonstrating a live feed of Aegean air traffic at the computer on his desk. He estimated that 25 percent of Turkish flights in the region passed within 6 nautical miles of Greek territory. Nevertheless, he said, Greek pilots were under strict instructions to avoid incidents. To emphasize this point, Spiliotopoulos pointed out the special telephone on his desk which he used to contact Greek pilots to urge them to avoid confrontations with their Turkish counterparts. At the same time, he added, caution and international law obligated Greece to protect civil aviation in its FIR by inspecting unidentified aircraft. Observing that Turkish actions were motivated by a sense of weakness as well as bravado, Bryza counseled continued calm in Athens' response.

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